

force to address high priority risks to children's health. Former President George W. Bush further amended the Executive Order to extend the work of this task force an additional few years. Since its establishment, the Task Force has successfully developed strategies and action plans for addressing asthma, unintentional injuries, lead poisoning, childhood cancer, and school environments.

The Children's Health Task Force Act would simply codify the Task Force by an act of Congress and charge it with recommending and coordinating Federal strategies to address environmental health and safety risks for children in the United States.

I am pleased the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Center for Healthy Housing, and Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital have endorsed this important bill.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting the Children's Health Task Force Act. We must ensure that our children grow up in a safe and healthy environment.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. KEITH ELLISON

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 26, 2012

Mr. ELLISON. Mr. Speaker, on July 23, 2012, I was unavoidably detained and missed rollcall votes No. 499–501. Had I been present I would have voted “nay” on vote Nos. 499 and 500, and “yea” on vote No. 501.

HONORING 2012 OLYMPIC COMPETITOR LOPEZ LOMONG

SPEECH OF

HON. ANN MARIE BUERKLE

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 26, 2012

Ms. BUERKLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a native of my district and 2012 Olympic competitor, Lopez Lomong.

Lopez Lomong was born in Kimotong, a small village in southern Sudan in 1985. Lopez had a happy childhood until one day, when he was 6 years old, his whole life was turned upside down. His village was attacked while he was attending church, and Lopez was taken by rebel soldiers from the Sudan People's Liberation Army. After weeks of watching other boys slowly die in the rebel camp, Lopez was able to escape through a hole in the fence with the help of three other boys. Lopez and these boys ran for three days through the African plains until they reached Kenya and were placed in a refugee camp.

Lopez would spend the next 10 years in this refugee camp, attending “school,” playing soccer and trying to survive day to day on the small rations that were provided to the boys. One day, when Lopez was 16, the opportunity of a lifetime arose. Lopez wrote an essay to the Catholic Charities about what he would do if he were able to come to the U.S. His essay moved the people at Catholic Charities so much that he became one of the Lost Boys of Sudan who were relocated to the United States to begin a new life.

Leaving Africa behind, Lopez found himself an adopted member of the Rodgers family in

Tully, New York, a stark contrast from the plains of Africa. To feel at home, Lopez would go on long runs, as he had done in Kenya, and he drew the attention of his high school cross country coach. It was here that his running career began. Lopez showed immense potential and went on from New York to Northern Arizona University where he won two NCAA championships.

In 2007, Lopez became a professional runner and in 2008, after becoming a U.S. citizen, he made the Olympic team, proudly representing his new country, the U.S.A. At the Beijing Olympics Lopez was voted by his fellow countrymen to carry the U.S. flag into the opening ceremonies, and he went on to perform well, making it to the semi-finals of the 1500m.

In addition to his athletic achievement, Lopez has a heart and passion to see peace in the country of his birth that continues to be ravaged by civil war. Lopez's desire is to spread the word about what is happening in Sudan and to build a community center to give hope and opportunities to people who started out just like him.

At the 2012 Olympic Games in London, Lopez will once again represent the United States. I have no doubt that he will once again honorably and nobly represent our country as a member of the Olympic team.

Like so many others I am truly inspired by Lopez's story. I congratulate him on his success and thank him for his continued efforts on behalf of his home country of the South Sudan.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE ATHLETES FROM SOUTH FLORIDA REPRESENTING THE UNITED STATES IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES IN LONDON, ENGLAND

HON. ALLEN B. WEST

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 26, 2012

Mr. WEST. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a proud American, anxious to support our American athletes who will be competing in the 2012 London Olympics over the next two weeks. Like the vast majority of my fellow citizens, I will be closely following and cheering for each of our athletes as they represent our country—especially those from the state of Florida.

Every two years, when the torch has completed its journey across the world and the cauldron is lit opening up the winter or summer games of the Olympics, we put down our differences for a brief moment and rally around our young American athletes.

Each time the Stars and Stripes are raised just a little bit higher than the other flags and as the Star-Spangled Banner is played for the world to hear, we feel the unfettered pride of being an American.

For these next two weeks, American Exceptionalism runs through the veins of every American as we root for our fellow athletes. The very best of America can be seen in so many of our young men and women who compete to bring the gold home.

Athletes like Lopez Lomong, who escaped unspeakable horrors as a child soldier in Sudan after running for three days, only to

end up in a refugee camp for 10 years, before being rescued by an American family. After legally earning his American citizenship in a country he refers to as “next to heaven,” Lopez proudly carried the American flag in Beijing and will compete in the 5,000 meter race in London.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about this champion athlete has nothing to do with sports. After learning that he had two brothers still in Africa, he brought them to the United States where he encouraged them to attend a military academy so that they can give back to a country that has given him so much opportunity.

My daughters and I will be rooting for this true American hero and patriot.

This momentous occasion to represent the United States of America is an unequivocal honor for each athlete, the members of their team, their families, and all who have exhibited support along the way. As a member of Team USA, these champion athletes join a select group who will accompany each other in an endeavor to achieve the very best.

Mr. Speaker I am extremely proud to recognize the Olympic Athletes who reside in South Florida. I salute:

Venus Williams, a three-time Olympic gold medalist, has won a gold medal in tennis singles and two in women's tennis doubles. I am proud to proclaim that Venus Williams has won more Olympic medals than any other female tennis player.

Tony McQuay, a three-time NCAA track champion and helped lead the University of Florida men's track and field team to the 2012 college national title. Tony posted the third-fastest time in the world this year in the 400-meter event.

Sarah Lihan who is competing in sailing. After becoming the 2009 ICSA Women's National Champion, we will cheer her on as she sets sail to London in her first Olympic games.

Anna Tunnicliffe also competing in sailing. After winning gold in the Women's Laser Radial class in the 2008 Olympics she is back on Team USA to hopefully bring home another gold medal.

Christie Rampone is a defender on the U.S. Olympic soccer team. She has been an invaluable member of the Olympic team and this will be her fourth Olympics.

Becky Sauerbrunn will compete on the U.S. Olympic women's soccer team in her first Olympics. She currently resides in West Palm Beach and we look forward to seeing her succeed as a defender alongside her teammates.

Andy Roddick a native Floridian is competing in tennis for his second Olympics. He proved over and over that he highly excels in his discipline which is singles, doubles and mixed doubles.

Sanya Richards-Ross is track and field and will be competing in the following events: Women's 4 × 400m Relay, Women's 200m, and the Women's 400m. In the 2008 Olympics she brought home a 4 × 400m bronze and a 400m gold.

And finally, Foluke Akinrakewo a first time Olympian competing in the volleyball tournament. She was previously the starting middle blocker on the gold winning U.S. Women's Junior National Team.

As the world's attention shifts to London for the next two weeks and our nation turns its attention to the very best American athletes it is an honor to offer my congratulations and best